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Small Business Assistance Helps Entrepreneurs “Roll Out” New Business Venture

MUDDLETY - Introduced by mutual friends, Jim Bostic and Denver McMillion quickly connected, built a high level of trust and combined their diverse professional backgrounds to form a manufacturing company. Needing some assistance to put together a good business plan to secure adequate financing, they approached the West Virginia Small Business Development Center (WVSBDC) to help make their dreams a reality.

Directed by Conley Salyer since 2001, the WVSBDC, partially funded by the Small Business Administration (SBA), comprises 12 satellite offices on the campuses of community and technical colleges throughout West Virginia and two located at Region One Workforce Investment Boards in Beckley and Summersville. The SBA is a federal government agency which helps maintain and strengthen the nation's economy by aiding, counseling, assisting and protecting the interests of small businesses. SBDC's and SCORE, "Counselors to America's Small Business," are valuable SBA resource partners who provide counseling services and management assistance, free of charge in most instances, to current and prospective small business owners.

Conducting workshops on business structuring and licensing procedures, WVSBDC counselors also provide business advice on marketing, cash flow and pricing.

Driving down a gravel road through a yellow fence past a flock of turkeys, the last thing you'd expect to see at the end of a winding road in Muddlety, West Virginia is a sheet metal manufacturing company. Five miles back at the service station, people know that Muddlety has a new business: West Virginia Metal Wholesalers.

Just four years ago, Jim Bostic and Denver McMillion had not even conceived the idea of West Virginia Metal Wholesalers, a metal roofing and siding manufacturer. After the two men were introduced by friends, Bostic and McMillion realized that their backgrounds meshed and started toying with the idea of starting a business together. Bostic already owned a small business, Roll Form Tech, Ltd., which employed 17 people. In the late 1970s, he also managed a trucking company with 120 employees. Complementing Bostic's experience, McMillion possessed 27 years of experience in marketing and selling building materials. Together, the two men identified the opportunity for manufacturing coated metal roofing and siding using roll form technology. They realized that tighter Environmental Protection Agency regulations for shingle disposal had increased demand for metal roofing. They saw a distinct advantage as the only distributor of 100-year metal roofs in West Virginia.

Even though Bostic and McMillion had a great business concept, they still needed assistance in funding the \$1.1 million project. "Financing was the greatest obstacle," said Bostic. Well-known for their business successes, the two men approached Paul Cook at the Fairmont Regional Small Business Development Center in Flatwoods (Flatwoods SBDC).

Bostic stated, "I already knew Paul Cook and worked closely with him. I knew what I wanted and worked in conjunction with Paul to do the business plan." After completing the business plan, Bostic and McMillion approached banks for financing. "You have to sell yourself to the banks. I do what I say and it shows through," explained Bostic.

Securing financing from the Fifth Third Bank and the West Virginia Economic Development Authority, Bostic and McMillion worked closely with the local 4-C Economic Development Authority and the Flatwoods SBDC to secure the property in Muddlety. After obtaining the location, Bostic and McMillion constructed a manufacturing facility from the same type of sheet metal that the company will produce.

"We even used the same doors, trims and fasteners in the building that we will distribute to wholesalers within a 700-mile radius," said Bostic. With five employees, the company projects employing 32 to 35 workers by the end of the fourth business year. Driving every day from Spencer, Bostic is even musing about making Muddlety home, "I might buy some land on the other side of the mountain, build a house and settle here."

For more information on the SBA and the resources available to assist small business, contact the West Virginia District Office at 800-767-8052 ext. 8 or by email at wvinfo@sba.gov, or visit them on the web at www.sba.gov/wv.